

Trips to Market

Chap. III

619 but when the strong hand is weakened or withdrawn, then merry hell is let loose, and every tribe is at its neighbour's throat. Such a period is what every tribe and every individual Badawin long to see. It means raiding and fun for everyone and wealth for him who is bold and strong. Not much killing or loss of life follows from this state of anarchy, but camels change hands frequently, and there is loot for all and exchange of worldly possessions. Since women are always safe under such conditions (see Chapter VII) the Badawin considers this state of affairs as nearly ideal as possible, and is for ever talking about the good times when anarchy prevailed. This is his idea of heaven on earth, this is what he perpetually longs for. Is it not his birthright that "every man's hand shall be against him, and his hand be against every man"?

443 If tribes and confederations are at peace with each other, the
478 individuals and families move about at will in each other's territories,
361 as they go and come to and from the various towns that supply their wants. This movement to market towns is known as *musathilat* and exists all over Arabia. Each tribe has its special or favourite towns which it goes up to for its necessities, and it looks forward with joy to such visits. For instance, from time immemorial the Mutair, Harb, Shammar, 'Awazim and Northern 'Ajman have done their *musathilat* to Kuwait, while the Dhafir have visited Zubair, Nasriyah and Samawa on the Euphrates.

The system enables the town authorities to exercise a beneficial control over the Badawin who market with them, as any misbehaviour at once results in the tribe's being forbidden to enter the town—a
[643] very great hardship to the desert shopper. Despotic rulers like Bin Sa'ud naturally do not like the *musathilat* system at all, especially when it affects their border tribes, for these would like to spend their moneys outside the state, and are always liable to be got at by the powers that be, in neighbouring countries. One of the chief reasons for Bin Sa'ud's ten-year blockade of Kuwait was his determination to try and prevent his subjects doing *musathilat* with that town. The Ruler of the latter place naturally tried to encourage such *musathilat*, for if it were forcibly stopped, his people must have recourse to smuggling to get their goods out to the tribes.

Aristocrat Tribes

Chap. VI.

tribes like their own and despising the rest of the world. They are ⁶¹⁹ the 'Arab al-'ariba and with their co-equals the 'Arab al-Musai'diba.* 565

These 'Arab or pure desert Badawin divide themselves into:

- (a) Superior or Sharif tribes.
- (b) Inferior or non-Sharif tribes; everyone knowing and accepting the origin of his neighbour without question.

Of these the former are 'Asila; i.e. pure in origin and blood, and claim descent from the Patriarcha Qahtan and Ishmael. The latter are not Asil, i.e. are not of pure descent.

The following are the best known of the Sharif Arab tribes of Arabia proper:

'Anisah, Shammar, Harb, Mutair, 'Ajman, Dhafir, Bani Khalid Bani Hajar, Al Murra, Qahtan, 'Utala, Duwasir, Manasir, Bani Yas, Sbei, Qawasim, Hawaitat and Bani Tanim (not found as a whole tribe to-day).

The 'Anisah especially consider themselves to be the aristocrats of the desert, though the others do not always admit their superiority.

The following well-known present-day Arab Rulers claim descent as follows:

His Majesty King 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud—'Anisah (Masalik section).

His Highness Ibn Subah of Kuwait—'Anisah (Amarat section).

His Highness Ibn Khalifah of Bahrain—'Anisah (Amarat section).

His Excellency Ibn Thani of Qatar—Bani Tanim.

Also the noble family of the Al Sa'adun, former Rulers of the Muntafiq (present head His Excellency 'Abdullah Beg al Falah Pasha) claim direct descent from the Quraysh tribe, as well as being descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.†

The following are some of the Inferior or Non-Sharif tribes of Arabia proper:

* Arab historians have it that YARAB, the son of QAYNAN, who lived some centuries before Abraham, was the father of the ancient Arab peoples, and gave his name to Arabia. Hence the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar, are known as "Arab al-Musai'diba" (those who became Arabs) in contradistinction to the Arab who calls himself "Arab al-'ariba" (Arab of the Arabs), to distinguish himself from the latter common.

† The Sa'adun indeed claim that they are the poster of all descendants of the Prophet, in that they have never throughout their history given their daughters outside their clan, nor married with non-Sa'adun women.

Leadership of Shaikh

Chap. VI

SHAIKH

A vital element in the stability of Badawin society is the tribal leadership exercised by the shaikh.

The position of a shaikh of a ruling house or tribe is hereditary, to the extent that he must be a member of a definite family or house. It is, however, by no means essential that the shaikh's eldest son should succeed his father. When a shaikh dies, the question arises: who is the best and most suitable man of that particular house to lead the tribe? It is usual to recognise as chief that member who possesses marked experience or outstanding physical and mental qualities.

Hadā, or good fortune as a leader, most often secures the Shaikh-ship. If he has led the tribe on one or more raids, and has shown that he possesses qualities of "luck" as well as "leadership", the Shaikhship is his of right: It is most important to realise this point, especially in principalities like Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait which are under British protection. It would be wrong and useless, were Government to try during the lifetime of a Ruler, to get him to nominate his son as the next heir. It simply is not done, and an attempt to impose our principles of primogeniture would cause offence and lead to misunderstandings.

Bin Sa'ud in 1930 nominated his heir apparent, and each year since has tried to get his tribal leaders and brethren to swear fealty to his nominee. Some do so with their tongue in their cheek, others, notably Muhammad al Sa'ud, the King's brother, steadfastly refuse to obey. All know it to be a grave error on the part of the King. The King himself knows he has been mistaken, but the move was doubtless made to impress the European Ministers and Consuls residing at Jiddah. It pleases the Chancelleries of Europe. In private the King has said over and over again to the members of his family, "After my death, let the best man win". And this is what will no doubt happen in the end.

A shaikh's fighting force or tribe as a whole is known as *Gaum*, e.g. *Gaum al Duwish*, *Gaum Bin Sa'ud*, *Gaum Al Sha'alan* (in literary Arabic the word is *Qaum*).

A shaikh will say *Ya Jama'a* or *Ya Ra'a* when addressing his followers.

A Father's Rights

Chap. X

844 for the purpose. The mother lived, and her father personally thanked me for lending the mare and saving his daughter. In the absence of my mare a similar request for the loan of my horse was made (25th August, 1937). Unfortunately in this case the patient died.

955 The rights of a Badawin father over his children are absolute; the
286 mother has practically no rights. Should a man divorce his wife, the sons usually go with the father and the girls with the mother. Should the children be infants, the mother keeps them until they can fend for themselves, and then the father comes and takes them away. (The age in the case of boys is eight.) This removal of a son by his father is the cause of much heartrending grief at times, but is universally practised.

The children thus taken away from their mother live with their father and are brought up by their stepmother. They have the right of visiting their own mother's tent at stated intervals, usually once a week. In a tribe camped together the hardship is not great, but when a man has married a woman from another tribe, the rule causes much unhappiness, as the woman usually goes back to her people, who may be several hundreds of miles away; and she rarely sees her children again.

855 Among the Al Sa'ud, Al Subah, etc., it is a common custom to have
643 as wives two or three Badawin lasses at a time, who always remain camped with their own people. When a child is born to one of these desert-dwelling wives it is usually taken right away and brought up in the shaikh's household in Kuwait or Riyadh. It is not considered fitting that the offspring of one of the ruling family, even if the mother is of noble tribal birth, should be left to grow up in tribal surroundings.

587 This feeling is particularly strong if the child is a boy.* As a matter of fact, in such alliances the wife is early divorced and pensioned off with a handsome present. This marrying of tribal girls in addition to the "Queen", who is always a lady of the ruling family, is a normal and accepted practice among the ruling classes in Arabia. It is a method of showing honour to a tribe, and brings useful alliances in its train. Tribal shaikhs, on the other hand, usually content themselves with one wife.

* This does not run counter to the age-long custom among the nobility of Arabia of sending their sons into the desert to be brought up by the Badawin in order that they may acquire hardihood.

162, 166, 101, 619, 643, 622, 361, 438

/For information on the settled tribes of the Aden Protectorate and the Hadhramaut in 1920, the territory occupied, the paramount rulers and tribal chiefs, brief history, their settlements, means of livelihood, etc., see 30: Great Britain, MJ1 Saudi Arabia, category 116, pp. 509-546./